



AGENDA

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH AND GAME COUNCIL

15th OCTOBER 2022



AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME

**A Meeting of Council will be held at the Waikato Deer Stalkers Hall,
Wairere Drive, Hamilton on Saturday 15 October 2022 commencing at 11 a.m.**

AGENDA

	<u>Page</u>
1. Apologies	
2. Possible conflicts of interest arising from meeting agenda	
3. Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20 th August 2022 *	2
4. Matters arising from previous minutes	
5. Council correspondence *	8
6. Chief Executive's bi-monthly report & financial statements	
6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report *	12
6.2 Financial Statements *	20
7. Non-resident levy *	33
8. NZ Council meeting timetable *	45
9. NZ Council meeting August 2022	
10. Policy Review *	47
11. Sterile trout stocking report *	61
12. 2022 Drift Dive Surveys (Report attached separately)	
13. OSH Report	65
14. Council Governance Reports *	67
15. General Business	

* Denotes attachments

**N Juby
Chairman**

3/10/22

AUCKLAND/WAIKATO FISH & GAME



Minutes of a Meeting of Council
held at the NZ Deerstalkers Hall, Wairere Dr, Hamilton
on Saturday 20th August 2022 commencing at 10:00am.

PRESENT:

Chairman: N. Juby.
Councillors: G. Dickey, C. Sherrard, P. Shaw, B. Barnes, D. Cocks,
G. Annan, E. Williamson, T. Clark.
Staff: B. Wilson, D. Klee, J. Dyer.
Visitors: C. Jordan (NZ F&G), P. Hardy (DOC)

1. APOLOGIES:

M. Barker, R. Grubb, A. Daniel

It was moved;
that apologies be accepted.

Cocks/Annan – CARRIED

The Chairman welcomed the new C.E. of NZF&G, Corina Jordan, to the meeting. He noted that Ray Grubb, Chairman NZF&G had accepted Council's invitation to attend the meeting but unfortunately his flight had been cancelled due to storm conditions in Nelson.

Councillor Barker's written comments on the agenda were distributed to councillors.

2. POSSIBLE CONFLICTS OF INTEREST ARISING FROM MEETING AGENDA:

Nil.

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETINGS OF 11th JUNE 2022:

Councillor Williamson noted that he had attended the meeting on the 11th June. Also that the discussion under General Business concerning the Whangamarino Weir was incorrect in that it should state that the weir profile should be flat with a defined V, not the wide "U" shape that it currently has.

It was moved;
that the minutes of the previous meetings of 11th June 2022 as amended be accepted as true and correct records.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM PREVIOUS MINUTES:

The Chairman updated the meeting on his talks with the Chairman of Northland F&G about the potential merging of the two regions. Northland's position was that while they were not enthusiastic about the merger, they recognised the financial advantages of a merger with Auckland/Waikato and accepted that issues such as finding councillors for a small region was a problem. One possible scenario for Northland would be two field officers based north of Auckland covering the area from the Harbour Bridge north. However, concern was expressed by Councillors over the financial implications for Auckland/Waikato resourcing of any merger with Northland. The Chairman in reply noted that there would have to be a firm commitment by the NZ Council to fund the northern field officer positions on an ongoing basis.

In reply to a question, Mr Wilson stated that he had informed the Franklin Acclimatisation Society about the decision to remove their control over two ponds in the Piggott Wetland. He had received feedback from their president, Grant Mackay that they were disappointed in the decision but would not contest it. Discussion ensued over whether some form of bond should be imposed on newly balloted ponds to fund future maintenance.

Councillors discussed the potential use of social media for promoting Auckland/Waikato Fish & Game. It was agreed that a group be established to discuss social media initiatives. The group to comprise of Mr Dyer and Councillors Barnes, Juby and Dickey. Councillor Dickey recommended the Otago Fish & Game Facebook page as a good example of what could be achieved.

5. COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

The Chairman informed the meeting that he had discussed Council's letter on the Wildlife Act with the Chairman NZF&G, Ray Grubb. Mr Grubb had defended the use of committees by the NZF&G Council for such issues. Councillor Barnes supported this stance noting that it was important for individual committee to do in-depth research on issues. Councillor Williamson considered this an example of the NZ Council making critical policy decisions without seeking input from the regions.

Mr Klee observed that staff had input into the Wildlife Act submission but had no opportunity to comment on the final draft. Mr Wilson agreed to send out the national submission on the Wildlife Act to Councillors.

The Chairman tabled Mr Grubb's reply to the letter from Southland F&G suggesting that the implementation of the review was too slow. Ms Jordan clarified that Mr Grubb was replying in his position as Chairman of the Implementation Steering Group (ISG), a committee that reported directly to the Minister and was funded by DOC. The purpose of the ISG was to produce a report to the Minister, after consultation with the regions. The report would be reviewed by DOC, and then the Minister would make a decision as to whether the report would be released for public consultation.

The resignation from Dirk du Preez to the Minister of Conservation was tabled. It was agreed that the Chairman would send a letter to Mr du Preez on behalf of Council thanking him for his contribution as Councillor.

Corina Jordan

The Chairman invited Ms Jordan to address the meeting.

Ms Jordan updated Councillors on her background as both a field officer and RMA officer with Wellington F&G, followed by seven and half years with Beef & Lamb establishing and co-ordinating their RMA efforts. She had previously been the North Island Manager for Beef & Lamb and was very excited to return to Fish & Game.

Ms Jordan noted she had only been in the job for three weeks but saw helping the organisation to work more co-operatively as a priority, especially given all the legislative changes facing F&G.

The meeting rose for lunch at 12.30pm and resumed at 1:00pm.

6. CHIEF EXECUTIVE'S BI-MONTHLY REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

6.1 Bi-monthly Chief Executives Report

In response to a written question from Councillor Barker, as to why the field officers were identified in the CE report differently, Mr Wilson replied that the report was collated from the individual staff reports. Although he amended and added extensively to the reports, he did not change how the officers referred to themselves.

Councillor Barnes asked whether there was any monitoring of trout in Quarry Lake after each trout liberation. Mr Wilson replied that the only monitoring was angler usage via the National Angler Survey. Councillor Barnes observed that several members of the North Shore Fly Fishers Club regularly fished at the Quarry and could provide useful data.

Councillor Shaw inquired whether there were any updates on the situation with DOC regarding Harrier Hawks. Mr Klee replied that there had been no further communications.

Councillor Williamson reported that Shane Everett had excellent results using double door predator traps, which had outperformed other traps for catching ferrets.

The Chairman thanked Mr Wilson for his effort in co-ordinating the RMA effort in the temporary absence of the RMA officers.

Ms Jordan commented on Council's efforts with Heathy Rivers (Plan Change 1), noting that this plan change set a precedent for other regions in that it was the first regional plan in NZ to set environmental limits based on Te Mana o te Wai. Councillor

Williamson inquired as how this advocacy effort would impact on Lake Waikare; in particular, “*how can we be sure that the targets will be met*”? Mr Wilson replied that the targets under the *Vision and Strategy* were legally enforceable. The overall objective of Plan Change 1 was to set short-term targets towards achieving the 80-year goals in the *Vision and Strategy*. If these targets weren’t met then more restrictive regulations would be imposed in the next round.

Ms Jordan stressed that she was very concerned that the proposed replacement of the RMA could lead to generational delays in achieving resource outcomes.

Councillor Annan reported that pheasants this season were abundant, and they were consuming large quantities of pin oak and shingle oak acorns.

6.2 Financial Statements

The Financial Statement for the period 1st May to 30th June 2022 were tabled.

It was moved;

that the Chief Executive’s Bimonthly Report and Financial Statements be accepted.

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

7. NZ COUNCIL MEETING 16TH JUNE 2022:

The minutes of the meeting of NZ Fish & Game Council for the 16th of June 2022 were tabled.

8. RANGER TRAINING:

Mr Wilson’s report on ranger training was tabled.

Discussion ensued on the opportunities of joint ranger operations with the NZ Police.

It was agreed that clubs would be approached first for potential candidates for new rangers.

9. 2022 – 2023 BUDGET:

It was moved;

that the 2022-2023 budget and net expenditure of \$855,684 be approved.

Williamson/Cocks – CARRIED

10. WAIKATO DELTA REPORT:

Mr Dyer’s report on structures on Council’s land in the Waikato Delta was tabled.

Mr Wilson noted that the report was produced in response to a request from Councillors based on the principle that we “can’t manage what we don’t know”. Audits were carried out at irregular intervals on all Council’s wetlands, usually a different wetland each year.

The Chairman asked who owns these structures and are they all on F&G land. Mr Dyer replied that all the structures in the report were on F&G land including those structures some distance into the river as properties boundaries did not always follow land boundaries due to accretion and movement of the islands. Ownership of the majority of structures was unknown.

The contribution of Roslyn Simmonds in formatting the report was acknowledged.

It was moved;

That the report on the Waikato Delta be tabled and Mr Dyer and Ms Simmonds be thanks for their efforts.

Sherrard/Williamson – CARRIED

11. NATIONAL COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY:

The draft National Communication Strategy was tabled.

It was agreed that Fish & Game definitely required a strategy.

It was moved;

that the National Communication Strategy be received and that:

- a) It should be a “living document.**
- b) More resources should be put into this process.**
- c) Ongoing consultation should occur as the strategy develops.**

Annan/Cocks – CARRIED

12. GENERAL BUSINESS:

Mr Wilson reminded Councillors that an extensive review of the game regulations would be undertaken for the December Council meeting. He had already received request from members of the public for drift shooting to be banned between Cambridge and Hamilton on the Waikato River due to increased urbanisation and the presence of walking/cycle tracks.

It was moved;

that a report on drift shooting on the Waikato River be prepared for Council.

Cocks/Williamson – CARRIED

The Chairman spoke on his proposal that Fish & Game should have a closer relationship with other organisations representing hunters and gathers, including saltwater fishing groups such as Legasea as well as other hunting agencies such as BGAC and NZDA. The

purpose being to raise the profile and advocacy for sustainable management of wild foods. The Chairman emphasised that we already had a close relationship with Forest & Bird and other environmental agencies but had put little effort into other relationships. He believed that iwi would also favour participating in sustainable management of wild foods.

It was moved;

That NZ Fish & Game Council be asked to consider a strategy for a closer relationship with other agencies that have an interest in the sustainable management of wild foods.

Juby/Annan – CARRIED

There being no further business the meeting concluded at 2:33pm.

UNCONFIRMED



**FRANKLIN ACCLIMATISATION SOCIETY INC
PO BOX 203008
WAIKU PA 2345**

PATRON David Lawrie
PRESIDENT Grant Mackay
SECRETARY William Howard
TREASURER Grant Mackay

Auckland Waikato Fish & Game Council

06 September 2022

Re Piggott Ponds

We have discussed Councils change to remove us from Piggott block & feel somewhat concerned at process.

On 23 March we were told

“Council agreed to support your recommendations in regard to imposing a bond requirement for the 2023 ballot. Council also accepts your commitment that the required maintenance (spraying) to pond 1 will be carried out soon.

Council has asked that this issue is tabled again at their June meeting, and I’ll ask John Dyer to inspect the wetland before then.”

We would like to know what has changed on 11th June to for Councilors to reverse their decision.

We followed up as we committed to with spraying of Pond 1 and did new tenure rules trying in eliminate issues in past. (Attached)

(note ponds are 1 & 5 of Franklin's not 2 and 6 as in John's audit)

John Dyer's Audit does not show any major issues.

It does show John spoke with Pond holder. Fails to mention this pond shot a limit by 10am. Would dare to suggest that a pond with some natural food in it, is more attractive than a barren piece of water to a duck. Hence as we said back in March Pond 1 layout could do with being smaller & use some weed to useful effect.

Both William Howard & myself attended AGM. It is clear that the 2 new pond holders are keen to enhance block. Also clear is a couple of Pond holders want to do no more than they already do. Along with Troy Downs we are happy to help & committed to enforcing a breach of Tenure by a ballottee.

Following this I went at cut all the Pampas down along western boundary up to Pond 5 (at which time scrub cutter decided not to start. So, this is ready to spray out in spring.

We are not perfect make no argument about that. But we have & do help Fish & Game along with seeing the need to provide more input into the Piggott Block.

Without the Piggott Ponds is just another item taken away for Franklin to exist.

If you decide to stick with your vote then please send us formal expulsion for block under tenure rules.

Thanks Grant Mackay
(President)



Franklin Acclimatisation Society Inc

Piggott Pond Tenure Rules.

- Background. The Piggott Wetland is owned by Auckland Waikato Fish and Game Council. (AWF&G) There are 6 ponds that are individually owned as under terms of AWF&G. The Franklin Acclimatization Society Inc owns 2 of the ponds. All ponds are managed day to day by the Piggott Wetland Wetland Society Inc. which is made up of the Pond Holders.
- Bond. A bond of \$2000 is to be paid within 30 days of being awarded pond ballot. Bond is fully refundable at end of tenure so long as terms of tenure are met. (the intent of bond is for, if terms of tenure are not met there are funds to pay for repair work because of pond holder not meeting their obligations. This is the decision to be made by the Franklin Acclimatisation Society Inc. It will not be actioned without prior warning by email to Pond holder.
- Pond Tenure is for 5 years commencing from the end of the 2022 waterfowl season and will cease at the end of the 2027 waterfowl season.
- Ballot is for two pond holders; both must be members of the Franklin Acclimatisation Society for the full term of the ballot.
- Ballot is for two pond holders; as per Fish and Game Pond tenure rules both pond holders licence tags must be fixed to a stand prior to mark up day.
- The ballot holders must be the actual people that use the pond.
- One of the two balloted pond holders must attend a minimum of 2 Franklin Acclimatisation Society Committee Meetings a year (meeting held bi-monthly, this is for benefit of all parties to maintain/improve ponds)
- Pond Subscription of \$300 must be paid annually in October.
- Both balloted pond holders must obtain an Annual Hunting Diary/Application form from Auckland Waikato Fish and Game. All rules under the Auckland Waikato Fish and Game Hunting Diary/Application form must be adhered to.
- The balloted pond holders must have their completed Hunting Diary/Application Form must be in the hands of the Franklin Acclimatisation Society Secretary and Auckland Waikato Fish and Game Council's Chief Executive within fourteen (14) days of the end of the waterfowl season. Failure to meet this obligation could see stand tenure cancelled.
- Decoys must be removed by end of the waterfowl season.
- Maimai standards shall be those stated in the Fish & Game pamphlet titled "*Maimai Construction Guidelines*". The maimai floor area shall not exceed 10 metres square.
- There are no written laws regarding sportsmanship, but flagrant sky-busting or other acts of poor sportsmanship may be taken into account when an application to extend tenure is being considered. The



Franklin Acclimatisation Society Inc

unsafe use of firearms (as described in the Police Arms Code and the Arms Act 1983), may also be grounds for review of a tenure.

- Maintenance and development of stand sites shall be the responsibility of pond holders. Annual development for the improvement of habitat and hunting opportunity is to be undertaken. This will include spraying and keeping the pond clear of choking weeds. Plants such as Toi should be removed/sprayed (while young as they become expensive to deal with later) Grass around pond is to be mown/or scrub-cutter twice a year if needed. Young trees are to be trimmed around to give opportunity to develop. General Pond maintenance is the pond & the interconnecting drain system between the ponds.
- Working bees conducted by the Piggott Wetland Society Inc must be attended by at least one of the pond holders. (typically 3 to 4 per year) These working bees are for the block as a whole not ponds directly. The block is managed by the Piggott Wetland Society Inc.
- The Committee of Franklin Acclimatisation Society Inc has the right to inspect the balloted pond at any time to ensure the above tenure rules are being adhered to. Failures to rules being adhered to will result in the termination of the pond tenure.
- Key will be provided to Pond holder to access block and storage container. At end of tenure key or keys must be returned.
- Pond Holders have exclusive use of block in the first two weekends of the season. Itinerant hunters may use the Block outside this, according to the current conditions of the General Access Authority, available from Fish & Game, Hamilton.
- Hunting in Piggot Block ceases at end of Dabbling Duck season (Mallard/Grey as per all Auckland Waikato Blocks)
- Attached document is the "Piggott Wetland Management Action Plan 2004" This guides the use of block & the Piggott Wetland User Group activity in maintaining which all Pond Holders in block are part of.

Pond Holder

Signed _____

Pond Holder

Signed _____

Franklin Acclimatisation Society

Signed _____

Bi-Monthly Chief Executive's Report

October 2022

OUTPUT 1: SPECIES MANAGEMENT

Project 1111: Drift Diving

Drift dive reports: Adam combined and reformatted the drift diving reporting from the normal four reports to one large report to be more consistent. Although this took some time the end result will save time on future reports.

Project 1112: Banding

Band returns: We use the Gamebird Hunter Phone Survey not only to determine hunter effort and success but also ask about any bands they've recovered. John contacted one hunter, whose hunting group had always given their bands to his father, who worked out that they were not being reported. When the survey prompted him, he visited his father the next day and found 33 bands not reported over a 17-year period. A similar request to another hunter in the Hauraki Plains, who may be sitting on a similar number, failed to elicit any information, even with several follow up reminders, mention of the prizes he could potentially win, the 0800 BIRD BAND number he could use, and so on. In both cases, these hunters will be invited banding next year in the hope that they might gain a better insight and empathy for this practical work.

More photos and publicity around the handover of the Banding Together prizes for those hunters drawn from the hat who reporting bands this year has also been requested to raise future awareness of this potential benefit to them.

Project 1112: Shoveler counts

National Shoveler count: Staff completed this year's national Shoveler counts with assistance from several volunteers. David and John have provided some feedback on the report which will be finalised in the coming weeks. The national count is showing a significant decline in total count numbers this year, partly due to the low counts witnessed in this region. John's counts, which take in some large sites, were mostly down this year. For instance, the Lake Waikare count was 2,340 in 2021 and 2,240 in 2020, but just 490 "spoonies" this year. Watercare now requires detailed online "*Site Induction Module*" completion, even though John is not in contact with any machinery onsite. Prearranging visits to so many sites, especially Watercare ones, is quite time consuming.

Project 1121: Harvest Assessment: Fish

Trout tags: Due to the excellent tag reporting page Roslyn set up, Adam has been receiving tag return information from all over the country. Roslyn rejigged the tag reporting program to send tag data to the appropriate regions. Unfortunately, we are still receiving snapper tags. The "new web page" should have a dedicated tag reporting system so we hope the issue will be resolved at a national level.

Project 1122: Harvest Assessment: Game

At the time of writing, all surveys are complete, but we are awaiting data to be entered in order to close off the survey so that it can be downloaded for analysis.

Project 1161: Fish Releases

Lake Moanna-nui: Due to major dredging works and lake drainage scheduled for later this year the 2-year-old fish intended for Lake Moanna-nui were released in Quarry Lake in August. There have

been several phone calls wanting information about the releases that occur when Reel Life is paused for the winter. We have been announcing the releases on our FB page.

Adam installed tank holders to safely secure oxygen cylinders to the large transport tank. The tanks were mounted so the tank gauges could be seen in the rearview mirror.

OUTPUT 2: HABITAT PROTECTION/MANAGEMENT

Project 1211 RMA

Healthy Rivers: Along with our consultants, Sarah Ongley and Helen Marr, we met with the Waikato Regional Council to discuss our appeal on Plan Change 1 in regard to the Whangamarino Wetland becoming a separate Freshwater Management Unit (FMU). At present the Whangamarino is part of a much larger FMU, which includes the lower Waikato catchment downstream of Ngaruawahia. The advantage of a separate FMU for the Whangamarino is that the WRC would need to specifically address the water quality and water quantity issue. As Councillors will recall during both the Waikare S128 review and PC1, the effects of changing wetland hydrology were considered out of scope so we were hamstrung in our ability to address the issues associated with the flood scheme in terms of water quantity. However, the WRC are very reluctant to change the existing FMU boundaries so it could be an expense to pursue via the High Court. Therefore, Helen is preparing a report on the pro's and con's of the Whangamarino FMU matter, to enable us to make a fully informed decision on whether or not to pursue.

Conservation lots: Adam investigated conservation lots offered by District Councils. Only Waipa has access provisions in their conservation lot policy and only in designated corridors.

Mangatutu Stream: Adam has agreed to participate in a meeting with Florida Farms to discuss the DOC lease on the Mangatutu River.

Instream work: Adam investigated a digger reported in a stream, but no charges were filed as the activity was lawful despite being in the spawning season. The maps used by the Regional Council to determine trout habitat do not include tributaries. DOC were also informed of the incident but again their native fish layer only included mainstem habitat. Adam is working on creating new maps that are more accurate using the Freshwater Fish Database, eDNA and historic Fish & Game data. This is a large project and will take some time.

Whangamarino Weir Section 128 Review; Work is ongoing, currently engineers are conducting a high-level cost estimate to retrofit the existing gates. Trials would need to be undertaken to test its feasibility, and ideally, a retrofit of part of the structure would be undertaken with gates that offer greater water level control and fish passage (while providing the ability to trap pest fish such as koi). Significant technical and political work is necessary before the viability of this option can be determined.

Cambridge WWTP: David has had 2 further meetings with consultants to discuss progress with the long-term option for the upgrades in treatment for the Cambridge WWTP. At this stage it appears that all key targets pertaining to our MOU will be met and significant reductions in nutrient and sediment loads will be achieved. It would be great to finally be able to write a neutral or potentially even a submission in support of a WWTP application.

Project 1221: Council Wetlands

Te Aroha Wetland: David and I met with Louise Sauders, CE of the Manaaki Kaimai Mamaku Trust. The Trust has funding from the Labour Government for conservation projects in the Kaimai Mamaku ranges and the downstream catchments. The Trust is interested in co-projects, especially

in regard to wetlands and predator control. We discussed working with the Trust on weed and predator control on our Te Aroha wetland. The wetland is currently maintained by the local F&G club, but they're struggling as most of their members are elderly. Lousie believed that the Trust could provide both workers and financial assistance.

Fish and Game Comprehensive consent application; Ecological Potential have finalised their report which classifies the different habitat types found on Fish and Game land, a key requirement of the S92 request for further information. During site visits some weed species were discovered which should be given high priority due to their current limited abundance and ability to spread quickly. The report was forwarded onto Gerry Kessel (ecologist) and Ryan Morrison (Processing Officer). Subsequently David and I met with them to discuss the report and work out a consenting pathway. David suggested that instead of getting bogged down in further information requirements that we attempt to work through a conditions framework that will allow us to practically undertake the necessary management actions while mitigating any potential effects. It was reiterated that we are only undertaking the management actions in these wetlands to maintain their hydrology and manage threats such as sedimentation and weed incursions. We certainly don't want to create any adverse effects on wetland ecosystem health. There was agreement in principle that this would be a good way forward and two further meetings are scheduled in the coming months to progress the application on that basis.

Piggott Wetland: A ballot for Pond 6 in the McKenzie Wetland and Ponds 1 & 5 in the Piggott Wetland was undertaken September 24th. A lot of phone calls requesting various details beforehand. A condition of ballot entry is that they visited the site in advance. In the McKenzie Wetland, this involved providing a F&G boat to ferry them to the pond and back as it has no other access. What we don't want are people who just landbank ponds, who have no other interest in them. Rather, we want people keen to maintain and develop their ponds and contribute to the User Group work and comradery on site.

Dean Wetland: Mexico water lily still hangs on. Four new plants recently sprayed. Waterweeds have got a head start over the covid lockdowns and have blocked many navigable channels within these F&G wetlands. They're being systematically sprayed back to restore access.



Photo caption: This stoat has swum approx. 4m to climb and enter this grey teal nest box.

McKenzie Wetland: Flood levels in early August provided an opportunity to get a boat into areas that would normally be too difficult to reach, especially to spray pampas plants that are a haven

for vermin such as rats and probably also mustelids. Hunters with maimais in the swamp know all about rat problems, the less of these vermin the better.

Project 1231: Other Land

Lake Kimihia: A total of \$1.68 million over 3 years has been spent by a number of agencies on Lake Kimihia. Summer droughts had left it without water for lengthy periods and a number of valuable wetland birds there simply disappeared. However, repairs to the weir, the old stopbanks and other remedial work such as extensive fencing and planting has seen a much-improved situation and water is now everywhere. The local community Facebook group Friends of Lake Kimihia can claim much of the credit for raising the profile of this lake's plight. It doesn't hurt that the lake is also now highly visible right next to the realigned State Highway 1 near Huntly. However, the group, though they played an important role, never received any direct funding. John met them onsite recently to draft a new application for various traps to deal with the so-far ignored issue of the stoats and ferrets they see running about the edge of their lake. If the rare birds there such as breeding bitterns and fernbirds are to have any chance of surviving, to say nothing of the large flocks of grey teal and shoveler the group sees in the gamebird season, then their offer of free labour monitoring traps should be capitalised on.

F&G Wetland Consent Application: David has lodged a consent application to install two weirs on sections of a drain that is dewatering the Pungpunga wetland. This drain was first dug post WW1 and is continuing to have significant adverse effects on wetland hydrology. It forms part of the wider project being conducted in concert with Waikato RiverCare and with funding from WCEET the GBHT and WRA. In total we have successfully secured \$450,000 of funding and in-kind contributions and the project will encompass 4.2 km of fencing, 14 Ha of planting, 27 Ha of weed control and restore the hydrology of over 100ha of remnant wetland and marginal farmland.



Photo of the drain running through the middle of the Pungapunga Wetland.

Bethell's Wetland: John has recently assisted with banding fernbirds caught in mist nets near our Bethell's Wetland, using their recorded bird sounds to attract them. If this species is unable to naturally recolonise the restored Lake Kimihia, (it only flies poorly), then such trapping and relocation from nearby F&G land might be an option.

ABCD Flax Block: David spent a day in the wetland documenting the hydrological alterations that have been made since the flood events of March/April 2017. It took F&G several years of staff time, \$180,000 of gamebird licence revenue to restore water levels in the block and create a high value wetland that provided significant habitat for both recreational game birds and taonga species such as bittern. The water levels since 2018 have been low, to the point where the ecosystem health of the wetland is compromised. This has been exacerbated by successive droughts but even now after a wet June/July, water levels remain sub-optimal.

Despite multiple promises that new flood modelling information would be made available we are yet to see any evidence that the water levels in the wetland had anything to do with the flooding that occurred in March/April 2017, which led to ICM making several drainage modifications within the wetland. In fact, all the previous modelling information, provided by ICM suggests the wetland water levels have negligible influence on scheme capacity and would cause <2mm height difference in a flood event.

We remain somewhat befuddled by the actions taken, who sanctioned them, under what consents they were conducted and simply what the evidential basis was for undertaking them in the first place. We have requested a meeting with ICM and DOC staff to formulate a plan to ensure these issues are finally rectified. Ultimately the wetland water levels could be increased further to optimise habitat values and this should be the overarching aim.

Site Visits: David has had 3 meetings with landowners wishing to restore wetland habitat on their properties.

Wetland Projects on Private Land: Planting has been completed at 3 sites, using a combination of WCEET and GBHT (billion trees) funding. In the instances where WCEET funding has been utilised it shows up in our budgets as we are acting in a project management role and oversee the activities. We are subsequently reimbursed from WCEET upon completion of the works. This helps alleviate any cashflow issues landowners may have and ensures WCEET has F&G providing oversight on project implementation.

For GBHT the funding agreements are with the landowners and therefore they are required to pay invoices and get reimbursed after approval from a referee which is usually a F&G staff member. There are instances e.g. the current Te Aroha Wetland application where Auckland/Waikato F&G are the applicant and if the funding bid is successful funding expenditure and reimbursement will show in our accounts.

Whangamarino Weir Maintenance: There have been several enquiries from hunters and associations who have been understandably frustrated at the lack of water in the wetland over the past few duck shooting seasons.

The weir is due to be resurveyed as soon as water levels allow, and the results will be used to determine the nature of the maintenance activities required. It is important to note that even if the surveys reveal the weir has slumped further, the final decision regarding remedial action may not be entirely in our hands. As councillors are aware, WRC has actioned a S128 review on the weir consent, partly as in their opinion the weir may be causing greater than anticipated adverse effects on flooding and sedimentation in the wetland. Therefore, any move to raise the weir, even if just to its consented level may not be straight forward.

The hydrological modelling work conducted as part of the review also indicates that due to recent summer droughts that extended into the start of the duck shooting season the wetland would have been below the targeted minimum levels regardless of whether the weir was at design level or not. It's important for people to realise that there are multiple variables that control wetland water levels, with the weir just being one piece of the jigsaw puzzle. Attributing a linear correlation between weir height and water levels is incorrect. This will all be canvassed in some detail in the technical reports which we will disseminate as soon as we are able to.

From a F&G staff perspective, we would love to raise the weir back to its consented levels or even higher to the maximum consented 3.14 RL. From the work we have done it would certainly improve habitat for avifauna. Unfortunately, it's not that simple.

Project 1235: Trees

Trees distribution: Water tupelo, (*Nyssa aquatica*), seed collected from the McKenzie Wetland has been distributed to F&G growers in our region who requested it. This tree can and does grow in standing water and also offers a useful seed eaten by waterfowl. This was imported by the Auckland Acclimatisation Society in Peter Howard's day. Unfortunately, the person who helped us do so could no longer remember where her source was when Frank Thompson later asked her. So those mature trees we have growing now are all there is. As an important seed source, they need to be cared for accordingly. Likewise with the equally rare swamp hickory, (*Carya aquatica*), on our Dean and McKenzie Wetlands, which were grown from seed supplied to John by Dr Keith Hammett.

Annual tree order: This years tree order was distributed to clubs, wetland associations and licence holders with special projects.

OUTPUT 3: PARTICIPATION

Project 1311: Access negotiation

Waipa River: Adam visited the three properties at Toa Bridge to discuss access. The negotiated access below the bridge is working well and both landowners were happy with anglers asking to fish. Unfortunately, the landowner at the bridge is selling so Adam will monitor the situation and approach the new owners when they arrive.

In conjunction with Walking Access NZ, Adam has discovered the property on the upriver side of Toa Bridge has legal public access. Adam approached the previously hostile landowner and was informed he was not welcome on the property. Adam is working with the neighboring landowners, Otorohanga DC and Walking Access NZ to make sure anglers will be welcome once past the first landowner.

Moakurarua Stream: Adam reviewed the Moakurarua Stream access file and contacted Walking Access for advice. Although the owner has not surveyed the marginal strip, they have fulfilled their OIA obligations. The only means to review the access is if we can prove the owner is continuing to refuse access. We can then make a complaint to the OIA office. Securing access downstream at the bridge near Honikiwi should be a priority but there is no funding or incentives for the landowner.

Project 1331: F&G Newspapers

Adam completed the first draft of the 2022/23 flyer that is scheduled to be released some time October.

Project 1341: Other publications

Swan: An article on the somewhat forgotten historic technique used to capture black swans has been submitted by John for DoC's Banding Department publication. Planning is underway this summer to catch and band swans in much the same way, as well as attach radio-tracking devices on them, in the Manukau Harbour.

Quarry Lake releases: Adam released FB videos of each Quarry Lake fish release.

OUTPUT 4: PUBLIC PROMOTIONS

Project 1431: Liaison Advocacy

John gave a talk to South Auckland Birds NZ at Pakuranga on the 5 species of teal we have in New Zealand. How many people can name them all?! It was also a chance to talk about and promote a whole variety of F&G activity using 40 supporting photos to a much-interested group.

Project 5442: Public Awareness

David provided some information to BirdCare Aotearoa who are inundated at this time of year with well-intentioned people bringing them 'orphaned ducklings'. Key messages to get out to the public are;

- It is common for mallard hens to leave their ducklings to go feed.
- These 'brood breaks' can last for over 2 hours.
- It should not be assumed that ducklings encountered without a hen present have been abandoned.
- It is rare for a hen to abandon her ducklings unless under severe duress e.g. constant predator harassment.
- Unless you are certain a hen has been killed, i.e. have witnessed this occurring, please leave duckling where you found them.
- If you observe the ducklings at a distance for 3 hours and the hen has not returned to them, then it may be reasonable to assume they have been abandoned or orphaned.

OUTPUT 5: LAW ENFORCEMENT

Project 1511 Ranging

Adam conducted ranging on the Waipa when in the field and no contacts were made. Adam checked two anglers on the Waikato River in Hamilton and both were licenced. Three anglers at Lake Hakanoa were checked all with no licences but no sports fish.

New rangers: A request was sent to all clubs for nominations from anglers/hunters interested in becoming honorary rangers. So far there's been no response.

Project 1531 Legal

John's review of Wildlife Refuges is underway. Some of the farm's names have completely changed over the years and/or the various owners now live elsewhere. These are all being systematically tracked down for consultation that will begin soon.

OUTPUT 8: PLANNING REPORTING

Audit: The auditor is currently overseas but sent a list of preliminary questions before he left.

Project 1973: Donations

Adam completed a report on CAF America outlining the process and what is needed for donations.

B. Wilson

Chief Executive